

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 174107
ORIGIN EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /009 R

66011

DRAFTED BY: EUR/WE:MARYKE CRANERUS

APPROVED BY: EUR/WE:RPAGAKELLI

-----087881 111429Z /46

R 110320Z JUL 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 174107

FOLLOWING REPEAT VALLETTA 2064 SENT ACTION SECSTATE 07 JUL
78

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 2064

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY VEST FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, MT

SUBJECT: THE EUROPEAN DIALOGUE WITH MALTA

1. I AM CONCERNED BY THE DRIFT THAT HAS DEVELOPED IN
EUROPEAN ATTITUDES TOWARD MALTA, A DRIFT WHICH SEEMS
UNNECESSARY AT BEST AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS AT WORST.
MY PURPOSE IN THIS MESSAGE IS TO SUGGEST THAT WE CONSIDER
WAYS TO ENCOURAGE THE EUROPEANS TO GET THEIR ACT IN ORDER
SO THAT SOME KIND OF DIALOGUE CAN TAKE PLACE ON THE
ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF MALTA POST-1979 IN AN ATMOSPHERE OTHER
THAN LAST MINUTE THREATS AND ULTIMATA.

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2. AT THE MOMENT THERE IS NO DIALOGUE. INSTEAD THE BALL
IS BOUNCING AROUND SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE CONTINUALLY
PREOCCUPIED BUT NOW ALSO IRRITATED ITALIANS (VIZ THE
ANDREOTTI LETTER), THE SEEMINGLY COULDN'T-BE-BOTHERED
GERMANS, AND THE FRENCH WHO APPEAR TO FAVOR A DIALOGUE
BUT WANT NO PART OF THE COSTS. MEANWHILE MINTOFF IS

SETTING NEW DEADLINES BY WHICH TIME HE INSISTS HE MUST HAVE SOME EUROPEAN RESPONSE OR HE WILL HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PICK UP HIS ARAB OPTION, WHATEVER THAT MAY BE. THE RECENT QADHAFI VISIT, WITH ALL ITS CAREFULLY ENCOURAGED EUPHORIA BY THE MALTESE AND THE EASY PROMISES BY QADHAFI, MAY BE USEFUL TO MINTOFF FOR BARGAINING PURPOSES WITH THE EUROPEANS BUT COULD ALSO COMPLICATE HIS OWN OPTIONS IN WAYS EVEN BEYOND WHAT HIS OWN RHETORIC ABOUT SUPPORT FROM ALL AND SUNDRY AFTER MARCH 1979 MAY ALREADY HAVE CAUSED HIM.

3. BY SEPARATE CABLE WE ARE REPORTING THE DEMARCHE MADE TO ME YESTERDAY BY FOREIGN SECRETARY ABELA, JUST RETURNED FROM VISITS TO ROME AND PARIS AND A REBUFF IN BONN. I WAS TOLD THAT HE HAD FOUND NO EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER THAT OUR ALLEGED ENCOURAGEMENT OF OUR EUROPEAN FRIENDS (AS EXPRESSED IN THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER) WAS PRODUCING ANY RESPONSE. I WAS ASKED WHAT WE PROPOSE TO DO ABOUT THIS, IN LIGHT OF WHAT ABELA DESCRIBED AS THE NOW "IMMUTABLE" DEADLINE OF JULY 31 SERVED ON THE EUROPEANS.

4. I KNOW WE HAVE ALL BEEN THROUGH THIS KIND OF THING BEFORE WITH THE MALTESE. THEREFORE I DON'T THINK WE NECESSARILY NEED TO REGARD THIS LATEST DEADLINE AS THE LAST ONE. INDEED ONE COULD PROBABLY TAKE THE RELAXED POSITION THAT EVEN WERE MINTOFF TO PICK UP AND RUN WITH HIS SO-CONFIDENTIAL

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CALLED LIBYAN OPTION, OUR INTERESTS WOULD NOT BE THAT SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED. BUT I SEE NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD TAKE THAT RISK, PARTICULARLY SINCE WE BELIEVE MINTOFF GENUINELY WANTS TO RETAIN A STRONG EUROPEAN CONNECTION. SOME KIND OF DEMONSTRATED EUROPEAN WILLINGNESS TO TALK ABOUT HIS ECONOMIC REQUESTS SHOULD HELP KEEP MANAGEABLE WHATEVER RISKS THERE MAY BE IN MINTOFF'S FEELING PRESSED TO EMBRACE QADHAFI MORE THAN HE REALLY WANTS TO.

5. IN RESPONSE TO APPEALS LIKE THAT FROM ABELA YESTERDAY, I WILL CONTINUE TO DO WHAT I CAN TO REMIND THE MALTESE THAT A EUROPEAN DIALOGUE REMAINS OPEN TO THEM AND THAT IT IS AS MUCH AND MORE IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS TO RETAIN A STRONG EUROPEAN CONNECTION AS IT IS IN ANYONE ELSE'S. AT THE SAME TIME I HAVE EMPHASIZED A CONCERN THAT WHAT SEEM TO ME TO BE UNJUSTIFIED AND UNREALISTIC DEMANDS FOR FINANCIAL SUBSIDIES ARE IN THEMSELVES AN OBSTACLE TO ANY PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE - A POINT THAT ABELA CLAIMS HAS NEVER BEEN MADE TO THEM BY THE EUROPEANS.

6. I DON'T SUGGEST WE CHANGE OUR OWN POSITION ON USG ECONOMIC AID; WE HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS WITH BOTH THE

MALTESE AND THE EUROPEANS IN CONVINCING THEM THAT WE MEAN WHAT WE SAY ON THIS POINT (EVEN THE REDOUBTABLE ERIC DA-RIN SEEMS TO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT OUR POSITION ON THE MARSAXLOKK LOAN REQUEST HAS "EUROPEANIZED THE PROBLEM"). WHAT I AM SAYING IS THAT I THINK OUR OWN BROADER INTERESTS IN THIS AREA JUSTIFY A CAREFUL EFFORT TO GET THE EUROPEANS INTO A SUBSTANTIVE AND FRANK DIALOGUE WITH THE MALTESE ON WHAT THE LATTER CAN EXPECT FROM THEM. THE ONUS SHOULD BE ON THE MALTESE AND NOT ON THE EUROPEANS IF THERE IS TO BE A COLLAPSE IN THE DIALOGUE OR, WORSE, A REAL MALTESE EMBRACE OF THE LIBYANS.

7. TO PUT IT SIMPLY, THERE SHOULD BE A CONSCIOUS EUROPEAN POLICY ON MALTA; INSTEAD THERE IS A POSTURE OF DRIFT,
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RESTING ON SEEMINGLY LITTLE ELSE THAN A DETERMINATION NOT TO BE HAD BY THAT TROUBLESOME MAN. NEITHER OUR NOR EUROPEAN INTERESTS, HOWEVER RESIDUAL THEY MAY BE HERE, ARE SERVED BY THAT APPROACH.

8. I APPRECIATE THE OBVIOUS RIPOSTE; I.E. THAT WE ARE IN NO POSITION TO PRESS THE EUROPEANS TO GET ON WITH A DIS-CUSSION INVOLV-
ING ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR MALTA WHEN WE DECLINE TO BECOME INVOLVED OURSELVES. BUT WE HAVE LONG BEEN CONSISTENT WITH THE EUROPEANS, HERE AND ELSEWHERE, ON OUR POSITION REGARDING ECONOMIC AID AND WITH OUR VIEW THAT IT IS IN EUROPE'S INTEREST EVEN MORE THAN OURS THAT MALTA RETAIN ITS EUROPEAN CONNECTION. MOREOVER THERE IS CERTAINLY JUSTIFICATION, IN WHAT I WOULD HOPE IS AN EVOLVING USG POLICY ABOUT SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA, FOR US TO TAKE THE POSITION THAT MALTA IS MANAGEABLE AS A EUROPEAN RESPONSIBILITY AND THAT IT IS TIME FOR A SERIOUS DIALOGUE TO BEGIN WITH MINTOFF.

9. I CAN CONTINUE TO DO THAT HERE, IN INFORMAL AND QUIET EXCHANGES WITH MY NATO COLLEAGUES. BUT I WOULD HOPE THAT THESE SAME POINTS CAN BE MADE ELSEWHERE WITH GREATER EFFECT. TWO POSSIBILITIES OCCUR TO ME; THE FIRST, THROUGH INFORMAL EXCHANGES ON THE SUBJECT OF MALTA SOMEWHERE IN THE CORRIDORS OF THE UPCOMING BONN SUMMIT. THE SECOND, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONVERSATIONS THAT I ASSUME WE ARE HAVING WITH THE GERMANS FOLLOWING THEIR ASSUMPTION OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE NINE. LAINGEN

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE174107
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EUR/WE:MARYKE CRANERUS
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780283-0643
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780773/aaaacjvh.tel
Line Count: 166
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b7eace77-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2049703
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE EUROPEAN DIALOGUE WITH MALTA
TAGS: PEPR, MT, XG
To: BONN LONDON MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b7eace77-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014